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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine Reading Recovery training in relation to three models for teaching and learning: instructor-centered, student-centered, and community-centered. Typically, the theories on which these models are based have been used to predict how children learn and how they should be taught. However, the theories and consequent models can also be applied to predict teacher learning and education. The original design of the Reading Recovery training program closely follows the principles of a community-centered model of teacher education. By making explicit the implications of this model, in contrast to the other two models, Reading Recovery teacher leaders and trainers can better understand, plan for, and evaluate Reading Recovery training practices. Contains 10 references and a figure illustrating aspects of models for teaching and learning applied to teacher educators. (RS)

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Models of Teacher Education: Where Reading Recovery Teacher ® Training Fits

Paula Moore

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READING RECOVERY® COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA

Network News

Fall 1997

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Models of Teacher Education:
Where Reading Recovery Teacher® Training Fits

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The purpose of this paper is to examine Reading Recovery training in relation to three models for teaching and learning: instructor-centered, student-centered, and community-centered. Typically, the theories on which these models are based have been used to predict how children learn and how they should be taught. However, the theories and consequent models can also be applied to predict teacher learning and education. I suggest that the original design of the Reading Recovery training program (Clay & Watson, 1983) closely follows the principles of a community-centered model of teacher education. By making explicit the implications of this model, in contrast to the other two models, Reading Recovery teacher leaders and trainers can better understand, plan for, and evaluate Reading Recovery training practices.

Models for Teaching and Learning

Rogoff, Matusov, and White (1996) characterize two of the models for teaching and learning as originating from theories that predict learning is a one-sided process. One model casts learning as *instructor-centered* with knowledge viewed as a commodity that is transmitted from the instructor to the student's empty vessel. The second model casts learning as the acquisition of knowledge by learners by themselves. Like plants, students grow in response to the correct "nutrients" provided at just the right time in development. This model can be characterized as *learner-centered*. While these one-sided models carry very different implications for the role of the instructors and students, both one-sided models view learning and teaching as something that happens within individuals. Whether the learner is viewed as an empty vessel into which information is transmitted, or as a plant that follows its own unique growth patterns, the learner is seen in either case as independent and self-contained. Knowledge is taken in both ideologies to be an individual possession.

In contrast, Rogoff, Matusov, and White (1996) characterize an alternative model as one based on the theory that learning is a community process of *transformation of participation* in sociocultural activities. In this view, learning is a collaboratively and socially constructed entity, rather than an individual possession; education is an inquiry as learners interact with peers around topic, activities, or readings with the guidance of an instructor who has particular expertise in the area. I suggest that learning in this model could be termed *community-centered*.

An educational model has implications for instruction, because different models predict different roles for learners and instructors, and may even predict different teaching materials, different classroom organizations, and different time-frames. Following is a description of each of the models as they might apply to teacher education. Of course, such a description is hypothetical at best; it would be rare that any of the models exist in a pure form.

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Nevertheless, the descriptions do provide a useful way to evaluate the theoretical roots of common teacher education practices in general and practices in Reading Recovery training in particular. (See Figure 1 for a summary and comparison of the models.) While each of the models for teacher education is aligned with a particular theory or theories of learning, my purpose is to outline teacher education practice commonly associated with the models. For a discussion of the theories associated with these models see Wood (1988), Tharp and Gallimore (1988), Meadows (1993), and Wells (1994).

Instructor-centered Model

The instructor-centered model is the most frequently used instructional model at the university and college levels, including teacher education institutions (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). According to the theory underpinning this model, learning occurs by the transmission of knowledge from the instructor to the student. Therefore, the role of the instructor is to control the learning process by making decisions about what information to transmit and how to sequence it. The role of the student is to acquire the information and demonstrate adequate knowledge acquisition. Predictably, activities in a teacher education course based on the instructor-centered model will include presentations, lectures, and tests of knowledge.

As knowledge and learning are viewed as measurable and clearly defined products, a teacher education course developed under this model will have a clear beginning and ending regulating how much knowledge can be transmitted. In most typical North American universities the traditional academic year is parceled out into semesters or quarters. Typical materials in an instructor-centered model include syllabi, reading lists, predetermined assignments/projects, and tests, all of which are connected with the sequencing of transmitted knowledge.

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	One-Sided Models		Sociocultural Model
Typical Practices	Instructor-Centered	Student-Centered	Community-Centered
Instructor's Role	Transmit information	Provide learning opportunities	Guide: Foster joint collaboration, challenge, support; provide greater expertise as needed, particularly around rationales
Student's Role	Take in information and demonstrate competence according to prescribed curriculum benchmarks	Consider learning opportunities and make final choices about what is to be learned and when	Collaborate and negotiate as a member of a dynamic community of learners; be responsible and accountable to the community
Dominant Activities/Assignments	Presentations, lectures, tests	Self-initiated projects	Conversations about common experiences and readings, collaborative projects
Typical Time-Frames	Clear beginnings and endings, such as semesters	Open-ended: ends when the project is done	Extended time together, like a community to foster ongoing relationships and shared growth
Typical Classroom Organization	Students face the instructor; probably individual desks	May not even be a classroom!	Circles, so participants face each other for conversations; tables for collaborative work
Typical Materials	Syllabus, reading list assignments, grades	No typical materials - dependent on student projects	Long range plan; readings in common; flexible class agendas based on group's needs and activities

Figure 1: Models for Teaching and Learning Applied to Teacher Education

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Usually, the classroom is organized with students in rows of chairs or desks facing the instructor to facilitate transmission.

Student-centered Model

Courses and teacher education programs organized under principles of a student-centered model are rarer, especially at the undergraduate level. However, I suggest that graduate courses or inservice programs for practicing teachers often contain many of the practices associated with a student-centered model. The primary principle of the student-centered model is student control of the learning process. The role of the instructor in the student-centered model is to provide learning opportunities and present possibilities for study, encouraging student exploration and discovery. Students consider the opportunities and possibilities and make the final choices about what they will learn, how, and when. The dominant activities in a student-centered approach include self-initiated projects, self-assessments, and performances or portfolio assessments.

Students may choose to work in pairs or groups, but collaboration is not a primary principle of the student-centered model. Individual choice is the primary principle. Consequently, the time frame may be open-ended with the course or program ending for individuals when their projects are done. Students may meet individually with the instructor, as needed, in various settings appropriate to the project. There might not even be a formal class meeting, and there may be no typical course materials, beyond a basic list of recommended resources from the instructor.

Community-centered Model

The community-centered model is even rarer in teacher education, although some researchers and university practitioners are experimenting with programs and courses based on the model (e.g., Hillocks, 1995; Rogoff, Matusov, & White, 1996; Tharp and Gallimore, 1988; Wells, 1994). I suggest that Reading Recovery teacher training is the best known example of teacher education based on a community-centered model, and therefore, in this section I show examples from it to illustrate aspects of practice.

Based on sociocultural theory, the community-centered model is not just a compromise or a balance of the one-sided models, though it might appear so at surface glance. It does share some typical practices with the other models (e.g., students are active inquirers, and instructors may present information), but when clusters of practice are examined together, in context, they reveal a distinctly different model grounded in a vastly different theory about how learners learn through transformation of participation in a community of learners. In a course organized along community-centered principles, both the students and the instructor take active roles.

The instructor is best characterized as a guide who fosters joint collaboration, challenges ideas, supports novice attempts, and provides greatest expertise as needed, particularly around rationales (e.g., why five Reading Recovery lessons a week are key to acceleration). Students in a community-centered model are expected to collaborate, negotiate, and participate as they take responsibility for their own learning and for the joint construction of knowledge in the group (e. g., during Reading Recovery teaching sessions everyone takes an active role in debating the match between teaching and the child).

Reading Recovery teacher training is the best known example of teacher education based on a community-centered model ...

According to sociocultural theory, language plays a central role in the social construction of knowledge. Therefore, discussion is the dominant activity in a community-centered teacher education program. However, research indicates that while encouraging talk between learners may help the development of understanding, not all kinds of discussion and collaboration are of equal value (Mercer, 1995). The kind of discussion most useful for fostering inquiry and learning is, first, discussion in which participants present ideas as clearly and explicitly as necessary for them to become shared and jointly evaluated. Second, it is discussion in which participants reason together--problems are jointly analyzed, possible explanations are compared, joint decisions are reached. The original design of the Reading Recovery training program built in these two conditions. First, the teacher leader helps teachers-in-training learn to use the language necessary to present their ideas clearly and explicitly, and second, every lesson is a joint venture in which teaching and learning problems are analyzed and solutions proposed.

To accommodate discourse and collaboration as central activities, a classroom for teacher education organized around community-centered principles must have flexible seating arrangements. Usually, chairs are arranged in a circle so participants can face each other for conversation. In the original design of the Reading Recovery program, a small coffee table was placed in the center of the circle of chairs to foster an atmosphere conducive to informal discussion. Reading Recovery teachers-in-training might have a small note pad in their laps to jot down an occasional idea, but they do not need to do copious note-taking as in a transmission model. They need to be actively participating in discussion.

It takes time to develop a community of learners in which students feel free to challenge ideas and speak freely. Therefore, the typical time-frame for a course or inservice program organized under community-centered principles will be longer than a single semester or university quarter, in order to foster ongoing relationships and shared growth. In Reading Recovery,

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this time frame is a year for the formal training program; then, continuing contact further extends the time students gather together to continue learning.

Typical materials in a course organized around community-centered principles might include a long range plan (e.g., Teacher Leader Guide Sheets) and readings assigned in common related to a particular teaching topic (e.g., sections of the *Guidebook*), but would not include rigid agendas or pre-established syllabi. However, there may be flexible weekly emphases or topics (e.g., teaching for strategies, independence, or acceleration) based on the group's teaching and learning needs.

Conclusion

It isn't that either of the one-sided models is bad or ineffective. Different types of teacher learning may be suitable for different instructional practices. For example, lectures and presentations may be appropriate for learning introductory information about a new topic. Student selected topics of inquiry may be suitable for teachers in an inservice course who want to develop particular units to go with some aspect of their school's curriculum.

However, pedagogical knowledge about how to teach requires time for understanding to develop an opportunity for guided practice in applying the knowledge (Schulman, 1986; Canadian, 1994). Teaching is a complex activity that requires skillful decision making and careful orchestration of many variables: a particular content area, the particular materials related to that content, and assessments about where the particular students are in relation to the content. It is difficult to develop an understanding of how these variables interact to form optimum teaching and learning by being told in a lecture how to do it.

Likewise, it is difficult to understand teaching by watching videos of teaching. While one might learn surface teaching moves (e.g., as some people learn to march through the Reading Recovery lesson components without matching instruction to the child), understanding when and why to apply those moves can only be developed by working with information, selecting from it, organizing it, and arguing for its relevance. If Reading Recovery teachers-in-training don't acquire this deeper, more principled understanding about teaching and learning, they will not be able to make flexible teaching decisions that match each child's unique needs.

And that is why discussion is critical and why a community-centered model is most appropriate for guiding teacher learning. Teachers use talk to account for the opinions they hold and the information they share. Through this talking process, with guidance, nudging, and support from the teacher leader, they discover principled rationales for interpretations of children's behavior and for teaching moves they make. As Gordon Wells (1994) noted:

> It is not simply that, when faced with a problem, two heads are better than one, but that, by struggling to make explicit to the other group members one's perception of the problem and one's tentative ideas for its solution, one clarifies and extends one's understanding of the problem as a whole--for oneself as well as for the others. (p. 274)

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